

***Fairbank,
Maslin,
Maullin &
Associates***

*Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis*

TO: Janet Cobb
California Oak Foundation

FROM: Ben Tulchin
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

DATE: August 26, 2003

RE: Recent California Statewide Survey Results

Survey Methodology. From August 20-25, 2003, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) conducted a statewide telephone survey of 800 likely voters in California. The total margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.5 percent. The margin of error for demographic subgroups is higher.

A recently completed statewide survey found that California voters want to protect oak trees and cover them under existing environmental protections. Support was widespread and crossed partisan and geographic lines.

The survey first asked respondents whether or not oak trees should be protected by environmental laws. By a wide margin, voters felt that, indeed, current laws *should* protect oak trees – a solid majority shared this opinion (53%) compared to a minority that did not agree (30%) and the remaining 17% did not have an opinion one way or the other.

Then, the survey tested a more specific proposal to protect oak trees (see table below).

Support for Proposal to Protect Oak Trees

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Under current state law, California oak trees can be cut down by private land owners who want to convert the land for agricultural use, which is most often to plant grape vines, without a permit or consideration for environmental impacts. Would you favor or oppose a proposal that would include California oak trees in existing environmental protection laws that make sure that if oak trees are removed, then other oak trees will be protected?

Favor	57%
Oppose	32%
Undecided	11%

As the table above clearly shows, support for a proposal to include California oak trees in existing environmental protection laws is strongly supported by California voters – 57% to 32% with only 11% undecided.

Furthermore, support is broad-based as voters of varying party affiliation, ideology, gender, age, income, ethnicity, and geography back this plan. Here are some highlighted data.

- ☞ **Ideology:** Liberals and moderates favor this plan by wide margins – liberals by 72% to 15% and moderates by 56% to 33%. Even a plurality of conservatives want to protect oak trees (46% to 43%).
- ☞ **Party:** Similarly, overwhelming numbers of Democrats (68%) and independents (57%) support this proposal. Republicans are evenly divided (44% favor it and 45% oppose it).
- ☞ **Ethnicity:** Support transcends ethnic and racial differences, as solid majorities of African Americans (72% favor), Latinos (64% favor), and white voters (54% favor) want oak trees protected by current environmental laws.
- ☞ **Geography:** Pluralities of voters in every region in the state, including the Central Valley, favor protecting California oak trees. Not surprisingly, the traditionally Democratic strongholds of the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County support this proposal by wide margins (63% and 66%, respectively). But the more Republican areas of Southern California outside of LA County (52% favor to 36% oppose) and the Greater Central Valley that includes Fresno and Sacramento (46% favor to 42% oppose) also support the idea.

In terms of whom voters would prefer to enforce the laws protecting oak trees, the California electorate is more divided. A plurality prefers having the state enforce the laws under the Board of Forestry (44%), but a notable portion of voters (38%) favors having counties enforce the laws under a state mandate. The remaining voters are unsure.

Proponents of the plan have a tremendous advantage over opponents – voters are much more inclined to trust supporters on this issue. Voters were provided a sampling of supporters (mostly environmental groups including the California Oak Foundation) and opponents (ranchers, large wineries, and private property advocates) and there was no contest with whom voters sided – supporters by a greater than two-to-one margin (58% to 28%).

The common theme in these findings is that not only is there solid support for the proposal to protect California oak trees under current environmental laws, but opposition to such a plan is relatively minor and diluted and voters trust supporters of the plan much more than the opponents.